

IN THE CLAIMS

1. (currently amended) A piece of luggage comprising:

a first frame having a perimeter and an open side;

a second frame having a perimeter and an open side;

a strip of flexible material attached to the perimeters of both of said frames ~~around said open sides~~ such that said first frame and said second frame enclose a volume which can be increased by moving said second frame away from said first frame ~~and unfolding said strip of flexible material~~; and

~~an~~ a first expansion mechanism, said first expansion mechanism including comprising:

~~a front~~ protective plate attached to said first frame;

an expansion plate attached to said second frame and coupled to said protective plate, said expansion plate and said protective plate configured for selective positioning relative to one another in a collapsed position wherein said first frame and said second frame are positioned a first distance from one another and in an expanded position wherein said first frame and said second frame are positioned a second distance from one another, said second distance being greater than said first distance; and

a lifting mechanism allowing said front coupled to said protection plate and to said expansion plate, said lifting mechanism configured to be moved relative to said expansion plate from a position the first frame and the second frame between the collapsed position to an and the extended position;

~~wherein, when said front protective plate is moved relative to said expansion plate from said collapsed position to said extended position, said second frame is moved away from said first frame unfolding said strip of material and increasing said volume; and~~

wherein, ~~at a point~~ in at least one intermediate position between said extended position and said collapsed position, said expansion plate is not in contact with said ~~front~~ protective plate.

2. (currently amended) The luggage of claim 1 wherein said expansion plate and said ~~front~~ protective plate are resiliently supported in said extended position and configured to release the expansion plate without damage to said expansion mechanism, ~~such that if when a force is applied to said expansion plate in a direction subjected to a predetermined force when positioned in the extended position, to return said expansion plate and said front protective plate to said collapsed position, said expansion plate will move to said collapsed position without damage to said expansion mechanism.~~

3. (original) The luggage of claim 1 wherein said expansion plate is trapezoidal in shape.

4. (currently amended) The luggage of claim 1 wherein ~~at said extended position, said expansion plate is pinched by a portion of said front protective plate~~ said protective plate defines an opening and said expansion plate is received in said opening, said opening dimensioned to interfere with a portion of said expansion plate when in the extended position.

5. (currently amended) The luggage of claim 4 ~~wherein said pinching comprises stoppering by said expansion plate~~ 1 wherein said protective plate includes opposite sides, said opposite sides engaging and supporting said expansion plate when in the extended position and preventing lateral movement of the expansion plate relative to the protective plate.

6. (currently amended) The luggage of claim 1 further comprising a second expansion mechanism attached to ~~an opposing side of said luggage~~ said first frame and said second frame at a location opposite said first expansion mechanism.

7. (currently amended) The luggage of claim 1 wherein said protective plate

comprises first and second tabs depending therefrom and defining an opening therebetween, in said extended position, said expansion plate being is in contact with the first and second tabs on said front protective plate when in the extended position.

8. (currently amended) The luggage of claim 7 ~~wherein said tabs are in contact with a surface of a cut out in said expansion plate 1~~ wherein said protective plate comprises first and second tabs depending therefrom and defining an opening therebetween, said tabs being angled toward one another and said expansion plate extending between the tabs in the opening, wherein when the expansion plate is moved to the extended position, the tabs bind opposing side edges of the expansion plate and limit further movement of the expansion plate relative to the protection plate.

9. (currently amended) The luggage of claim 1 wherein said lifting mechanism comprises a rotatably mounted handle for sliding a defining a pushing pin in, said expansion plate defining a slot, said pushing pin located in said slot and moving said expansion plate relative to said protection plate as said handle is rotated.

10. (currently amended) The luggage of claim 1 wherein said lifting mechanism ~~rotates about an axis fixed relative to said front protective plate~~ is positioned between said protective plate and said expansion plate.

11. (currently amended) A luggage expansion mechanism comprising:

a ~~front~~ protective plate defining an opening at a top edge thereof;

an expansion plate received in said opening which can move and selectively positionable relative to said ~~front~~ protective plate from a collapsed position to an extended position and back again; and

a rotational lifting mechanism, secured between the protective plate and the expansion plate, said lifting mechanism arranged so that movement rotation of said lifting mechanism causes said expansion plate to move relative to said front protective plate;

wherein, said expansion plate is resiliently detained in said extended position by said lifting mechanism, thereby releasing said extension plate from the extending position and allowing the extension plate to move relative to the protective plate without damage to said expansion mechanism when subjected to a predetermined force when positioned in the extended position ~~in a manner such that if a force is applied directly to said front protective plate and said expansion plate when in said extended position to move to said collapsed position, said expansion plate and said front protective plate can so move without damage to said luggage expansion mechanism.~~

12. (new) The mechanism of claim 11 wherein said lifting mechanism comprises a rotatably mounted handle defining a pushing pin, said expansion plate defining a slot, said pushing pin located in said slot and moving said expansion plate relative to said protection plate as said handle is rotated.

13. (new) The mechanism of claim 12 wherein said slot defines a detent, said pushing pin resiliently retained in said detent when in the expansion plate is in the extended position.

14. (new) The mechanism of claim 11 wherein said lifting mechanism comprises a pushing pin, said pushing pin traversing an arcuate path as said lifting mechanism is actuated.

15. (new) The mechanism of claim 11 wherein said lifting mechanism is positioned between said protective plate and said expansion plate.

16. (new) The mechanism of claim 11 wherein said protective plate comprises first and second tabs depending therefrom and defining an opening therebetween, said tabs being angled toward one another and said expansion plate extending between the tabs in the opening, wherein when the expansion plate is moved to the extended position, the tabs bind opposing side edges of the expansion plate and limit further movement of the expansion plate relative to the protection plate.

17. (new) The mechanism of claim 11 wherein said expansion plate is trapezoidal in shape.

18. (new) The mechanism of claim 11 wherein the expansion plate floats in an intermediate position between the collapsed position and the extended position, thereby permitting internal shifting of the mechanism in use.